

SHORT COMMUNICATION

Reinstatement of *Ammannia triflora* Benth. (Lythraceae)

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Bentham (1867) named *Ammannia triflora* based on a Robert Brown collection from the islands of the Gulf of Carpentaria. The name was in use for many years, until the publication of the Lythraceae treatment in the Flora of Australia series.

Therein, Hewson (1990) declared *A. triflora* Benth. to be an illegitimate name, with the statement “*nom. illeg. non* Wallich (1828)”. Hewson renamed the species *A. pubiflora* (Koehne) Hewson.

Wallich’s publication, referred to by Hewson, is his “Numerical List of Dried Specimens of plant, in the East India Company’s Museum (1828–1849)”, often cited as “Wallich’s Catalogue”. *Ammannia triflora* Wall., which appeared in this publication, is a *nomen nudum*, and hence not a legitimately published new species. Nor can it be considered a new combination based on *Lythrum triflorum* L.f. or its homotypic synonym *Nesaea triflora* (L.f.) Kunth (published in 1825), as Wallich did not give any indication that his name might be based on either of these.

Therefore, *Ammannia triflora* Benth. is a legitimate name, and is the oldest available name for the species that Hewson called *A. pubiflora*. Ironically, *A. pubiflora* (Koehne) Hewson is an illegitimate name, a later homonym of *A. pubiflora* (Koehne) Sosn., validly published in 1915.

Another matter in need of clarification is the collection date of the type. Chapman *et al.* (2001) listed the place and date of collection of *Ammannia pubiflora* (= *A. triflora* Benth.) as “Carpentaria island a Novr 27 1802”. This was a transcription of the label of Brown’s

specimen at BM. Carpentaria island ‘a’ is Sweers Island (Chapman *et al.* 2001).

Flinders arrived at Sweers Island on the 16th November 1802, and did not leave until the 30th November. Brown is known to have collected on Sweers Island on several occasions, with his final visit on 27th November (Vallance *et al.* 2001). However, Hewson (1990) gave Robert Brown’s date of collection as 27th August 1802. This is clearly an error, as on this date the expedition was still on the east coast of Queensland, around Shoalwater Bay.

Interestingly, the Queensland Herbarium does not hold any subsequent specimens of *A. triflora* from Sweers Island. This is despite visits there by several botanists, including J.F. Bailey, J. Shirley, D. Henne, L. Pedley and M. Thomas. In fact, only Robert Brown has collected the species from (what is now) Queensland.

The revised synonymy for *Ammannia triflora* is as follows:

Ammannia triflora Benth., *Fl. Austral.* 3: 297 (1867); *Nesaea lanceolata* var. *pubiflora* Koehne, *Bot. Jahrb. Syst.* 3: 326 (1882); *Ammannia pubiflora* (Koehne) Hewson, *Fl. Australia* 18: 321 (1990), *nom. illeg. non* (Koehne) Sosn. (1915). **Type:** [Queensland] Sweers Island, 27 November 1802, *R. Brown* (lecto: BM [here designated]; isolecto: BRI; NSW).

[*Ammannia triflora* Wall., *Numer. List n.* 6323 (1832), *nom. nud.*]

References

- BENTHAM, G. (1867). *Flora Australiensis*. Volume 3. L.Reeve & Co.: London.
- CHAPMAN, A.R., MOORE, D.T., REES, R.G. & GROVES, E.W. (2001). Robert Brown's Australian Botanical specimens, 1801–1805 at the BM. Available at: <http://florabase.calm.wa.gov.au/brown>
- HEWSON, H.J. (1990). *Ammannia*. In A.S.George (ed.), *Flora of Australia* 18: 97–100, 321.
- VALLANCE, T.G., MOORE, D.T. & GROVES, E.W. (2001). *Nature's Investigator: The diary of Robert Brown in Australia, 1801–1805*. Australian Biological Resources Study: Canberra.